

# W O R D S & V i z i o n

UCFV Faculty & Staff Association Newsletter

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## From the Editor

Collateral Damage:  
Words and Meaning post 9/11

How have you been getting through this terrible term — the 'sort of war', postal paranoia, bio-anarchy, anthrax panickism (like the white chalk-like substance found in an ABBY stairwell), planes falling out of the clear blue sky, and the frightful spectre of truck and nuclear suitcase bombs to come?

I've been sifting through media debris seeking the comfort of some

lucid perspective on what the hell is really going on — no doubt an appropriate task for any educator in these strange days. What I yearn for, I guess, is that elusive nugget of eloquent observation that — in a flash — could say something revealing about our current state of darkness and uncertainty.

But all I've discovered so far is that language itself seems to be under fire nowadays, as people struggle to make sense of the unspeakable.

At first, for example, most commentators sought to *describe* the monumental destruction of WTC using terms like 'day of infamy', 'modern Pearl Harbour', 'horrendous tragedy', and so on. But these phrases rang hollow somehow, as if lacking the resonance needed to capture the full impact and effect of the event. Now most simply use "9/11," the short-hand date, a crisp, cool, abstract signifier for some-thing too terrible to contemplate, in part because it has, for North Americans, no true emotional precedents.

Similarly, what used to be absolute words, when employed in the context of the 'new normal' terrorist reality, are losing or perverting their original linguistic impact. What, for instance, is 'evil' when it uttered by both Bush and Bin Laden to objectify the other? (Of course, what was it before is also an interesting question.)

Then there was the national conniption fit over Bush's snub of us re not being mentioned on the close ally list, followed by the President's cover-up remark about how Canada is "family" and you don't have to acknowledge a "brother" in such a difficult situation that concerns all. Endless prattle on CBC morning Radio followed, analyzing the semantics of words like 'family', 'brother', 'neighbour', 'friend', etc., and what such designations really mean in relation to our relation with the U.S., as if the terrorist cataclysm was really all about, you know, O Canada.

Even academic freedom of expression is under attack in this atmosphere of impending disaster and chaos, and pretty close to home at that. Sunera Thobani's recent, as of this writing, at least, anti-U.S. speech in Ottawa (e.g., "foreign policy soaked in blood," etc.) raised a squall of protest to the apparent extent of financial support to UBC from individuals being curtailed, plus plenty of downright ridicule and snide satire in the press.

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from all members.

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Thobani seems taken aback by the vehemence of the response and bewildered that her right to speak truth is being contested and/or cursed. In a posted online essay she, in turn, responds that her facts are straight and her words carefully chosen. However, while many fair-minded readers might agree with the first part of that statement, and her right to speak out, fewer may assent to the second. Words, after all, do not exist in a denotative timelessness; they resonate to the nuances of day-to-day reality, carry connotations, shift in shifting circumstances, etc. In her essay, Thobani notes the objections to the "tone" of her original speech, but does not really address the matter, focusing instead on the veracity of her controversial content. Is it, then, so surprising that an audience with no background in living through terrorism would find her words generally appalling?

But I did find something clarifying, even somewhat cheering, though in a curious place. If you haven't seen it, here is the text of a take-off speech made by the pilot of United Airlines Flight 564 from Denver to Washington Dulles on Sept. 15, which has been widely e-mailed and reprinted (in *The New Yorker* and elsewhere):

First, I want to thank you for being brave enough to fly today. The doors are now closed and we have no help from the outside for any problems that might occur inside this plane. As you could tell when you checked in, the government has made some changes to increase security in the airports. They have not, however, made any rules about what happens after those doors close. Until they do that, we have made our own rules and I want to share them with you

Here is our plan and our rules. If someone or several people stand up and say they are hijacking this plane, I want you all to stand up together. Then take whatever you have available to you and throw it at them. Throw it at their faces and heads so they will have to raise their hands to protect themselves. The very best

protection you have against knives are the pillows and blankets. Whoever is close to these people should then try to get a blanket over their heads. Then they won't be able to see. Once that is done, get them down and keep them there. Do not let them up. I will then land the plane at the closest place and we will take care of them. After all, there are usually only a few of them and we are two-hundred-plus strong. We will not allow them to take over this plane. I find it interesting that the U.S. Constitution begins with the words "We, the people." That's who we are, the people, and we will not be defeated.

Then the passengers were asked to introduce themselves to their seat-mates, and to tell each other something about themselves and their families. "For today, we consider you family," the pilot said apparently. "We will treat you as such and ask that you do the same with us."

On the one hand, this is, plainly, a very effective communication on a challenging topic: top marks for that. On the other, it is of course, in its own way, dreadful — a grim survival plan. But what struck a life-affirming note for me was the emphasis on community, not combativeness, on the underlying conviction that if we *know* each other, share a common experience, however fleetingly, we will treat each other humanely, and the assumption that there is no alternative to that fundamental human bond.

Some commentators suggest that the trauma over 9/11 that has profoundly demoralized North America to the point of economic and psychological depression is an over-reaction. After all, they argue, the American Empire brought this attack on itself through its aggressive foreign policy, and besides, 6,000 deaths is not that much when compared to..., etc.

But for me, the subtext of this pilot's message pinpoints the absolute heart of the terrorist darkness: That the WTC bombers could live peaceably for months, even years, in their target country, that they went about their days as apparently good tenants and neighbours, taking tea with the landlady, renting cars, hanging out in local night clubs, dating, having fun in the Florida sun, generally engaging in a way of life that they apparently abominated, and, then, when that exalted moment of perfect jihadist certainty came on the hijacked planes, pulled out their cheap yellow box-cutters, turned to you, the friendly fellow traveler in the next seat, and slit your throat.

In the so-called Global Village, we certainly are a long way from really *knowing* each other.

On the lighter side of doom, there was a notice that the heavy metal band, Anthrax, is thinking of changing its name, to avoid a) the possibility of suffering an ironic death after the death of irony, and b) generally bad press. Of course there's a tradition of such shock-value nomenclature for bands, especially in certain genres (e.g., Fuzzy Puke, Goiters, etc.). Still I wonder what, in the fullness of linguistic indulgence, had been the perceived positive resonance of the name 'Anthrax' *before* 9/11?

## On the Homefront

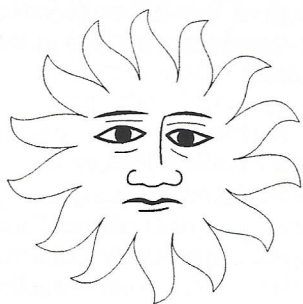
Along with all of the regular redeeming reports below, we have in this issue a couple of pesky pieces in response to the new contract and its implications. As well, check out the notes at the end for interesting info, including a cogent prescription for thinking happy thoughts.

Speaking of which, the good news is that this term is actually going to end someday. Then we can all go off somewhere to revitalize shattered psyches. If you are



sticking close to home, for long therapeutic bouts of sitting and staring into the fire, I've included some mildly meditative reading, too, a holiday cracker of sorts — but don't worry, no loud bang. Have fun under the Xmas tree, minora, Ogham, whatever...

-Ryszard Dubanski



## President's Report

### Personnel Changes

As was reported in last issue, Jacqueline Ritter, FSA Admin Assistant of six years, has been appointed Executive Assistant to the UCFV Board. With much regret at losing such a valuable and dedicated employee, the FSA wishes JR congratulations and all the best in her new position.

The Executive began its search for JR's successor in October. Amongst a field of very strong applicants, I am really pleased to announce that our new Admin Assistant is Florence Kehler. Flo joined us the last week of October and although she only had a week to work with JR to familiarize herself with the position, she is doing a fantastic job. The FSA may have its faults, no doubt, but man can we pick employees! Flo just kind of slid into the job — an extremely difficult one I may add — with no muss, no fuss; she took over, and that was that.

Welcome Flo, and thank you. I hope you are as happy with us as we are with you.

### FSA Task Force On Restructuring

I am really disappointed in the response to the Task Force survey distributed in late September. Only about 25% of the membership responded, and that just doesn't give an accurate picture of your issues and views. We can't assume that the majority view of the respondents is the majority view of the membership; nor can we assume that the 75% who did not respond are satisfied with the status quo.

The question portion of the results will be sent out soon (while the comments will be distributed later). The Task Force will use the information garnered from the survey when making its recommendations for change, or not; it should be submitted to the Executive by the end of January.

### LTD Premium Increase

In an effort to save money on insurance premiums, thirteen Colleges and University-Colleges — UCFV being one of them — formed the Provincial Benefits Consortium in 1995. The Consortium engaged Maritime Life as the carrier. By 1998 over \$500,000 had been saved, and as agreed at the Central Table, the savings were put into benefit enhancements. Because UCFV already had a richer plan than most we did not benefit to the extent some of the others did, but still there was improvement all round.

However, in the last few years there has been a dramatic increase in insurance rates which Maritime Life says is due to heavy usage. UCFV has received renewal rates for January 1, 2002, and although there is a premium increase to all the benefit plans UCFV pays for, the most substantial is to LTD. On January 1<sup>st</sup> our LTD premiums will go up 70%. As our LTD plan is employee paid until UCFV takes over on April 1, 2002, all employees will have to pay the increase for January, February, and March.

UCFV is actively exploring an alternative to Maritime Life. If they do find a carrier with lower rates they will do everything possible to have them in place by January 1<sup>st</sup>. UCFV will keep us posted as to their progress.

### Faculty Sabbaticals

It has come to our attention that many Faculty misunderstand the meaning of 'sabbatical' as it pertains to the seven year sabbatical leave clause we negotiated for our present contract. A sabbatical is not earned R&R, but rather an extended scholarly activity. Faculty must apply with a plan for approval, and will be accountable upon return from the leave. UCFV will assist with the applications to ensure that all Faculty will have the opportunity to access this leave.

I apologize; we should not have assumed that all Faculty would know what a sabbatical was. The information should have been included in the Tentative Agreement bulletin we distributed for ratification last spring.

### Political Reality

I spent all day yesterday writing a scathingly funny exposé of the policies the Liberals are imposing on British Columbians. At least, I thought it was hilariously funny when I finally called it quits — at 2:00 a.m. However, after re-reading the piece this morning I realized that at best it was a poor attempt at political satire, that my talents must lie elsewhere, and that I should just stick with writing this report.

There are a few things, though, that I absolutely feel *compelled* to comment on. Please bear with me:

- The \$6.00 minimum wage for people entering the



work force. What is that? No really, what is that, besides a notion so ridiculous it doesn't even deserve consideration. Yet it became law the other day. Do the Liberals think that everyone working for minimum wage is a kid still living at home? Did they consider that this is going to make life even more difficult for students, especially in light of the impending increase in course fees?

- Replacing the decrepit MSA hospital with a private one. Now, there's a brilliant idea. The Liberals say it will be a long time before they can afford to build Abbotsford a new hospital, but with private money construction could begin in the near future. Just think, a few years from now Abbotsford may have the distinction of being the city that lead the way to a private health care system for British Columbia! Cool, eh? Care at a new hospital would be far better than what MSA's antiquated equipment is able to provide now. A brand-new up-to-date hospital would do our community proud. Secure in the knowledge that Abbotsford has a state-of-the-art facility — for those who can afford to use it — you and I can happily jump in our cars and toodle up to Chilliwack or down to Langley when in need of hospital care. Minimum wage earners, who don't have their own vehicle and can't afford to pay the ambulance charge — the Liberal's are talking of privatizing the Ambulance Service as well — can always take a Greyhound.

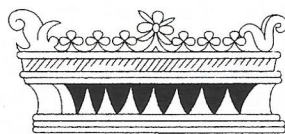
- Cutting public sector jobs in order to balance the budget. This one baffles me the most. All those soon-to-be laid-off

people who are currently contributing tax payers will become societal financial burdens if they end up on Employment Insurance or Welfare. The Liberals say that balancing the budget will stimulate the economy. I'm sorry, but I fail to understand how a higher unemployment rate will stimulate the economy.

- And, consider this: the Liberals say it is 0, 0, 0, for post secondary over the next three years. This means that UCFV will not receive additional funding to cover the expense of the contract we ratified last Spring. As of next April 1st UCFV has a two to three million dollar problem. There will be no money to cover our salary increases, faculty sabbaticals, seven course load, and the six course load research option. If UCFV is to honor our new agreement we are facing lay-offs next year, probably lots of them.

One more comment: the Liberals got in by a landslide last election, and yet I cannot find *anyone* who is willing to admit to voting for them now.

-Bev Lowen



## Faculty Grievance Report

### Sabbaticals

As departments begin time-tabling for 2002-03, Faculty eligible for a sabbatical should make their intentions known to heads. Eligible Faculty are full-time B's who have completed seven years employment

since their initial appointments as B's (which is not necessarily seven years seniority). The sabbatical is for one semester, to which is added accrued p.d. and annual vacation. Teaching Faculty may qualify for a two-semester sabbatical, providing they have banked three sections. The fact that a Faculty employee has taken an assisted ed. leave prior to April '02 does not affect their right to take a sabbatical in the seven years beginning in April 02, although it can affect the timing within the seven years (see more on this below).

UCFV and the FSA do not wish to see department operations impaired by too many Faculty taking their sabbaticals at the same time. So, heads should establish a queue and keep a record of the changes year to year. First at bat is the Faculty member who has never taken an assisted ed. leave or who had taken one before all other dept. colleagues. Last up is the member who took an ed. leave after all the others. If the member first up passes for 2002-03, he/she still retains priority in 2003-04. The number of sabbaticals to be taken in any one year should be determined by Faculty in each department, without, however, affecting the individual's right to take one within a seven-year period.

Employee Relations will forward to heads Faculty lists noting the date of their appointments and if and when they had taken ed. leaves.

The passages above were circulated by e-mail on 13 November. Since that time some members have asked about application criteria and accountability, which I understand Management will address and inform department heads in due course. Those eligible for the sabbatical should compose a "research program" proposal, to be circulated within their departments, along the lines of a scholarly activity proposal. Presumably,



members returning from sabbatical would submit a follow-up report outlining their progress toward the originally cited objectives. Management does want to see some level of accountability, justifying the expenditures involved.

Concerning the "research option" (distinct from the research sabbatical program) which would see a reduction of courses from 7 to 6, the employer may well have little or no means to support. At the time of negotiations late last winter and early spring, UCFV and the FSA agreed to establish the principle, notwithstanding the lack of substance. And, the intent of both parties was clearly stated that the scholarly activity fund would not fund this ongoing research option. One of the ideas now being considered is to use part of the scholarly activities for the research option. Your FSA officers would find this more-or-less unacceptable as we are bound to uphold this crystal-clear provision in the recent negotiations and contract ratification process.

So, Management will have to make some funding decisions, which have become problematic, given the fiscal regime imposed on it. In fact, the FSA has increasingly serious concerns about UCFV's ability to meet the negotiated wage bill which will peak in fiscal 2002-03.

My contribution to relevant talks at the labour Management table turns on the appeal and grievable nature of the application and adjudication process to be forwarded by RITTL to the Labour Management Committee. If there are no funds available for the support of the research option and UCFV determines that section reductions should not occur (given its estimate of the enrollments needed to justify expenditures), then there's no urgency to agree on appeal and grievance procedures to be invoked by unsuccessful Faculty applications for 'research + 6' designation. Any review or appeal procedure must conform to one or the other of two legal paths:

1. unsuccessful applicants may request a grievance on the basis of unreasonable, capricious, arbitrary, or discriminatory judgements made by the employer or made by a UCFV committee for which the employer must accept responsibility since it has only delegated an advisory function to that committee. It matters not that panelists on that committee are dues-paying members.

Or

2. Joint FSA-UCFV endorsement of the committee's recommendation, which precludes grievances, it being understood that the FSA may not fail to represent any protestants before endorsing the committee's recommendations (there are two other avenues available which I assume are non-starters — let UCFV decide and make their decision non-grievable and let the FSA decide on the list). The potential permutations of committees, advice, department involvement, flow-charts are endless — but in the end they must conform to the paths of decision cited.

-Bob Smith



## Staff Grievance Report

### Collective Agreement

Tim Cooper, Barry Bompas, and I have been meeting weekly since the start of the semester to go through the Collective Agreement.

With Nancy Scarrow's assistance we have gone through and cleaned up language in many of the articles and we are now in the process of incorporating the items from our last round of bargaining. We anticipate having the new collective agreement ready for circulation to the members sometime in the new year. If you have questions about the new language or the Collective Agreement feel free to contact the FSA office.

### Shop Stewards

Thank you to those who have expressed interested in becoming a shop steward. For information I have included a list of all the shop stewards and where they can be reached. Please contact any person listed if you have questions or concerns. You may also call me, Heidi Tvete, at local 4341 or Bob Smith at local 2498. Due to everyone's busy schedules we haven't been able to start monthly meetings yet but plan to soon, and are in the process of arranging a training session for January.

-Heidi Tvete

### Shop Stewards

<i>Staff</i>	<i>Local</i>
Margaret Brackett	4217
Julie Croft	4035
Ellen Dixon	4264
Colleen Olund	4524
Doug Rasmussen	4477
Karmjit Sidhu	4477
Margaret Slabicki	4477

<i>Faculty</i>	<i>Local</i>
Tim Lynch	4387
Art Knight	4396
David Maroun	792-4071
David Riel	850-8672 x 157
Norm Taylor	4225



## Human Rights Report

Since my last report I have attended two gatherings: the annual fall meeting of the HRISC and a conference organized by MECBC. The former group is the Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee of CIEA. Since our mandate has been expanded, we are in the process of amending our terms of reference. Notably, we are being encouraged "to form partnerships with Canadian and International Non-governmental Organizations and human rights groups and promote social justice world wide." A big assignment — we wondered how we would go about it.

Our chairperson and the CIEA Staff member assigned to our committee invited a representative from CoDevelopment Canada to offer us one option we might consider. CoDev has been in existence since 1985 and is funded in part by CIDA; it was formed by a group of activists looking for ways to directly link unions in BC with similar organizations in Latin America. There are 30 projects currently underway and each one is committed to gender equity, women's empowerment, labour rights, poverty reduction and to the strengthening civil society. CoDev makes a ten year minimum commitment to each project. Member locals will be asked to consider participating in such a partnership.

The weekend following I attended a conference organized by the Multicultural Education Consortium of British Columbia. The organization was formed in 1990 to "facilitate responsiveness in public and post-secondary education institutions with respect to multiculturalism, anti-racism, equity and diversity," and the workshop offerings certainly reflected a wide range of activities in those areas.

Before I arrived I was concerned about how much time would be focused on post-secondary issues.

However, I had no difficulty finding appropriate workshops and all of the keynote speakers' remarks were challenging. One in particular stood out for me and that was Linda Coyle, vice president of Kwantlen. She spoke on unlearning racism; she spoke with us rather than lecturing from prepared notes. I'm sure she is able to do this because she lives the work daily. She seemed to move effortlessly from concept to example and on through analysis without dropping a thread. She never risks losing the audience since each member must have felt personally addressed. She brought us to reconsider our own racism (no matter what our origins) and not to feel absolved of that responsibility because of our work with diversity and multiculturalism.

We need to continue the conversation about racism within our families, workplace and community and to consider its many manifestations, subtle as well as overt. As she remarked at the outset, we were all brought up in a racist society which continues to hurt us all in countless ways. We can make change but not by denying the presence of racism in ourselves and our communities.

All of the workshops drew attention to the continuing need for and difficulty with addressing these issues in our various institutions. Many were focused on strategy, particularly encouraging Faculty to integrate a multicultural/diversity perspective into their courses. The weekend definitely rekindled my own desire to start some sort of a group here. Whether it is called a committee on diversity/equity/anti-racism doesn't matter, but the time is right.

-Ellen Dixon

## Contract Chair Report

I'm writing this in the eighth week of my first term as contract chair. Funny, seems like I've been

doing this longer. Time flies when you're having fun.

I've had several departments invite me to come to their department meetings, and I've done my best to answer questions about the changes made to the contract in the last round, and to listen to their concerns about the next round. Usually I can't answer questions right away; however, in going away and looking it up I get to learn the contract. It's interesting for me to see what the issues are in other departments, and of course very important for me to know when bargaining begins again. My receptions have not been cold; they've ranged from warm to scalding!

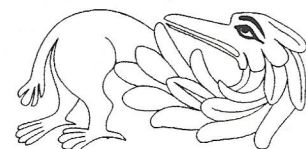
If you'd like me to come to your department or committee, or to talk to me as an individual, I'd be very happy to come.

My office in ABBY is B314B, phone 4456. I know my way to the CHWK campus too.

Barry Bompas, Heidi Tvette and I are meeting weekly to formalize the past agreement into the contract. I hope to be finished by Christmas at which point the previous bargainers can check over the writing and we can sign off on it. There are still some loose ends to be sorted out. They include the research option (looked at by RITTL), the role of LAMM in evaluating workloads below the 150 threshold, and at the point of writing I'm not sure of all the rules around the sabbatical.

-Tim Cooper

*(Ed. See below for more regarding Department visits.)*





## Numb and Numb-er re Contract

Did I ever tell you about the time I tried to understand what an FTE is? You may think you know what an FTE is, but you probably don't, and if you're an instructor here, you probably really should, because that's what you're paid to produce.

*You should—I can't.* I sat in dumb and numb (and *dumb-er and numb-er*) amazement as Norah explained for half an hour what one actually is. An FTE is a number. DUH.

I didn't get it, though. I guess I never do—I never was any good at Math. I got 46% in my Math 12 government exam. I did manage to grasp that an FTE is calculated to 6 or 7 decimal points and that different programs have different numerators and that you need a *damn* good calculator to work one out.

"So that's what I've been doing all my life—producing those!" (No, that's not what I thought. What I thought was actually more like this: "O MY GOD!!! Where AM I??? How did I get HERE??? WHO is going to understand ME??? I don't even speak the SAME LANGUAGE!!!!")

Okay, I admit it: I panicked. I often do these days. Can't figure why. Maybe it's the Abbotsford air.

I was wrong to panic. As it turned out, the FSA people listened and apparently understood. They talked to me individually afterwards and said intelligent, useful and even heartening things. Martin told me about a former high school English teacher of his, and suggested that I write a piece for *Words & Vision*. I felt better. But that was LATER. At the time I felt like a refugee. It's hard to put into words—maybe I felt more like an immigrant—some sort of alien, anyway.

Did I tell you I had been invited to an FSA table-officers meeting to explain what I was going to be presenting to an upcoming joint Labour/Management committee? I was intending to talk about workload, to explain how English Faculty were concerned about doing their jobs the way they must and should be done—the way, possibly, that Martin's old English teacher would have understood and approved of.

Norah spoke before I did, and as I awaited my turn to speak I tried to get the FTE calculations into my head but I couldn't and I felt like I was just about to address a group of stony-faced immigration officers in Arabic-accented English. I figured they would be able to guess that what I was saying mattered to me but at best all they could do was nod and smile politely and look interested if they could.

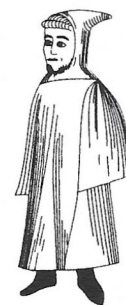
But the FSA officers listened attentively and gave kindly support. I haven't been to the joint committee yet.

I want to talk there and here about how numbers often don't mean at all what we seem to think they mean, although we seem compelled to speak only the language of numbers when we talk about the things that matter most. 0/0/0 is the number I'm hearing these days and I know we'll hear it all the time from now on until we get a new set of numbers.

Did I tell you my second daughter's boyfriend is studying music in New York? Two towers against a famous city skyline: 09-11-01. He's okay. It's *us* I'm worried about.

The numbers I need to talk about are 150 and 7. Those are the numbers that supposedly describe our workload. It's only fair that we all teach the same number. That makes workloads equitable, doesn't it? But I never was any good at Math. Did I tell you I got 46% on a government exam?

Actually, the government changed the number. They gave me 50%, allowing me to enter university. That was back in the mid-sixties when old WAC Bennett was premier (no Liberals in those days!) I wrote him a despairing letter, and even got a reply, signed by him. It said he had asked the examiners to re-read my exam—and damned if they didn't find another 4 percentage points!



Did I tell you I've only voted twice in my life? Once was for a Rhinoceros Party candidate who didn't win because he only got 2 votes; one of them was mine. I used to wonder who the other guy was but eventually I realized that candidates vote for themselves. Lines from a horrible old 60s pop-song: "One is the loneliest number/That you'll ever see"—I guess I just like to think I gave that old Rhino some comfort and a little company.

Anyway, I don't think my vote was wasted. This delightful Rhino parodied the other candidates so well that they themselves laughed when he spoke, recognizing their true, their truly absurd, selves. The other time I think I voted Liberal—I wonder if I started the trend. Still, I'm proud to say I've never voted Social Credit or Conservative or Reform or NDP and until the Rhinos come back I'm not likely to discharge my civic duties or exercise my democratic rights.

So I'm not going to stand up and be counted. Did I tell you I don't have time? Did I tell you that I'm too busy producing FTEs?

Did I tell you that I used to share an office here with the current



BC Finance Minister? He never talked numbers then although he used to speak to his wife on the phone an awful lot. There were no windows in that office—only a skylight to the Abbotsford skies. I forget the office number now. I shared that office with an entire Aviation department. Scott Fast, Ron Dart, and innumerable unnamed sessional instructors did too.

Now I have an office all by myself. Just me. That's 1. It's lonely without a finance minister, assorted aviators and political advisors — nobody to share my mathematical disabilities, my fear of flying, my voting phobias, and my identity problems with.

Did I ever tell you that I was once on a student council with a cheerleader who scored more than 46% on her Math exam and eventually became a Canadian Prime Minister and who now teaches at Harvard and who flies back to Vancouver sometimes on jumbo jets, skimming the Richmond office towers, scattering the seagulls around the airport? Or did I ever tell you that I hadn't counted the number of legs a bird had until I exclaimed, at the age of 21, to my future-wife, "Look at that poor robin hopping in the back yard! He only has 2 legs!!!" (Which is more amazing? That one woman married me despite my innumeracy or that the other became Prime Minister?)

The number is 150. The number is 7. We all must produce the same number. How do we talk about it any other way? Can my 150 be the same as your 150? Should they be? Can my 7 and my neighbour's 7 and my neighbour's neighbour's 7 be the same? Can we achieve equity using numbers? Can we achieve high-quality education this way? Can we do more than produce FTE's?

Surely we have to be more thoughtful when we talk numbers. We have to add words from real voices to the discourse of numbers. There is a time to say, "Oh, I can produce FTE's but will you like what I produce? Can what I produce talk or write with a

real voice or listen with a real mind of its own? Can what I produce vote responsibly? Can what I produce do the math? Can what I produce understand why people fly planes into towers?"

That letter from the premier allowed me to enter university, so it had an important part in my life. I would never have pointed to a robin hopping about in my future wife's yard and I would never have my own spacious solitary office where I could look at the jets flying into and out of Abbotsford airport or at the photo of my 3 grown kids on my bulletin board. That Math test, which announced to me that I was not the stuff university graduates are made of, taught me back then that numbers don't always mean what they seem to.

We all know that numbers count. But they're sadly a pretty primitive language and when we deceive ourselves that they are the means to real equity and a means to achieving high-quality education, we are being as absurd as any Rhino on the planet. They can't help us much in solving our real problems. For that we need a better language, a language perhaps that can accurately represent a complex reality.

In a world where pilots become finance ministers and cheerleaders become prime ministers and where people fly planes into towers and people who have been *trained* to kill fly more lethal planes to drop bombs on refugees who may never have even been taught how to count, there is reason for us to care deeply about WHAT we produce.

Just imagine what Martin's old English teacher would say!

-Jim Anderson



## CMNS Dept. Notes re Contract

The CMNS Department met with FSA Contract Chair Tim Cooper on October 3. Tim outlined the details of the new contract regarding Faculty workload. The department expressed a number of concerns.

Members of the department asserted the argument that in 'writing-intensive' courses—which are also 'marking-intensive'—the maximum has traditionally been set at 23 students per section, and that the new contract was unfair to instructors of 'writing-intensive' courses because it would too often be the case that these instructors would be unable to 'put thru' 150 students per year, and would, therefore, be obliged to teach an additional section the following year, on a regular basis. Tim suggested that the solution was to increase the section maximum in order to ensure that the instructors did, indeed, put thru 150 students per year.

To the argument that 23 students was a legitimate maximum, and that students would suffer if section sizes were increased, Tim argued that he had seen "no data" to support the class maximums for writing intensive courses, and that marking loads were not excessive in these courses. He suggested we should reduce the number of writing assignments in order to accommodate the increase in section maximums. He also suggested that since PAC had approved writing intensive courses with a set number of assignments, then PAC would have to approve adjusted courses with fewer assignments, despite the fact these courses have been widely articulated with a significant and not-easily-or rationally-reduced set of writing assignments.

Members of the department also asserted that, under the terms of this



new agreement, instructors of writing-intensive courses would likely never qualify for the research option of teaching just six sections per academic year because the 'put-thru' requirement remains set at 150.

The department had a number of other questions.

-Where will the funds come from to pay for pedagogical support for additional "penalty" sections?

-What is to prevent regular Faculty from 'bumping' sessionals from full sections in order to ensure meeting the 150 students put-thru requirement?

-What is the FSA prepared to do to protect the relationship among regular Faculty and sessional Faculty under this scenario?

-Will department section offerings be reduced by 12.5% to accommodate the change in workload from eight sections per year to seven?

-Where will the FTE dollars go if a department's annual section offerings are reduced by 12.5%?

-Will those dollars be available to hire sessionals to teach sections so that the department's annual section offerings are not reduced?

-What is the FSA prepared to do in representing departments with writing-intensive courses to ensure that students continue to receive effective instruction and training?

-What is the FSA prepared to do to protect Upper Level courses where enrollments are frequently below section maximums?

-What is the FSA prepared to do to protect Faculty members from the potential reduction in section enrollments when additional sections of the same course are offered by Faculty who have to 'make-up' their 'put-thrus'?

-What is the FSA prepared to do about the perceived inequity among departments in terms of efficiency rates for student 'put-thru'—in a writing-intensive department, instructors will need to be nearly 100% efficient in order to 'put-thru' 150 students per year, whereas in departments with much larger section maximums, a substantially lower efficiency rate will still result in the 150 'put-thru'.

The CMNS Department was unanimous in feeling that Tim, representing the FSA, could not provide satisfactory answers to any of these questions. It is the department's impression that many of these issues were never even considered when the contract was negotiated. We are concerned that unfairness and inequities in the implications of this new agreement will have significant short-and long-term effects on the quality of education students will receive at UCFV.

We believe that the FSA and Management must come to some agreement that will protect instructors of writing-intensive courses from these inequities, enable them to pursue the research option if they wish, and ensure that the rights of sessional instructors of writing-intensive courses are protected.

The department instructed me to pass on these concerns to the FSA, the Dean, and the SAG.

-Paul Burkhart



## Erotics of Insomnia—or in the Still of the Night

Sleep — it's fast becoming a global obsession. Pharmaceuticals generate megabucks from our ongoing fear of not getting enough. In the U.S. alone, costs associated with sleep disorder treatment and related productivity shortfalls are now estimated at 100 billion dollars per year (Healthgate). More and more clinics are opening to devote themselves to the scientific study of slumber, and/or to aiding the doze-challenged among us.

Scores of personal websites attest to this preoccupation with 'a good eight hours,' offering their own unique/bizarre 'cures', plus support for the bleary-eyed. Try warm milk, they gently urge, or bananas; leave a murmurous radio on low for background noise; and if all else fails, there's always cutting up an onion in a jar and taking a few deep hits — sweet Allium dreams guaranteed.

Meanwhile, magazines and newspapers run endless advice on how to improve your sleep life. Don't booze in the evening; get more exercise over the day; no ab-twists or press-ups prior to bed; take Melatonin to regulate rhythms, Valerian to relax, Camomile to soothe; have sex to relax; abjure sex to avoid potential stress; think happy thoughts; and so on. Typically such articles close with dire warnings about how almighty stress is increasingly depriving us of sleep, making us worthless at work, hateful at home.

Yadda yadda. But what about the groovy *fun* of insomnia?

We've all heard of nocturnal activities, many of them legal, to distract you from angst about the sleep you're missing; several may even lead to a really swell snooze. But that's not whereof I speak. No, what I want to proclaim here is the sweetness of sleep *scarcity*, the dark delights of drowselessness. As a chronic insomniac I learned long ago to stop fretting about this



particular course in the rich banquet of life — surely I'm not alone? Enough then with the bad press for sleeplessness; it's time to set the record straight about a perennial and universal aspect of the human condition. (This is *not* an exercise in denial, by the way; and those bags under my eyes give my face character.)

To quit agonizing over loss of sleep may well be half the battle. For starters, let's consider that sleeplessness just may be no big deal. The scientific community is not exactly unanimous on why we sleep, last I checked, so perhaps the "what I really need is a good night's sleep" prognosis should be queried, even moderated.

Of course, there are theories. One suggests that we sleep to practice REM — that is, to rehearse stereoscopic coordination of eye movement, because that's what happens during sleep. But surely there's a cause and effect issue here: because any particular thing occurs during sleep, there's no inherent reason to believe that sleep exists simply to allow that thing to happen.

Then there's the more general 'Repair and Restoration' notion, proposing that since the body mends itself at night, after daytime exertions, that's what sleep is for. True, no doubt, that refurbishments do occur at night; but again this seems subject to chicken and egg riddling. Are some restorations simply happening when the body's at rest, or does sleep exist to accommodate/facilitate reconditioning?

'Mini-hibernation' fans claim we are set up to sleep when food is scarce or when life is dangerous. Sleeping, we conserve energy when it can't be readily replenished. In pre-history, once the sun set, the landscape became doubly perilous for unprotected humanity, with pitfalls and predators galore; what better way to keep safe than to develop a built-in command to seek shelter at sunset, lay down and keep still 'til light returned? These Circadian, or daily, rhythms, made good practical sense, then. Now that we have vanquished the

dangers of Night — well, some of them — perhaps that mode of sleep is becoming an atavism, like wisdom teeth or appendices, once-essential survival adaptations that now seem to be disappearing from the species.

There are psychological explanations of sleep as well. Maybe we slumber, *pace* Hamlet, to dream, i.e., to work out deep psychic issues through archetypal patterns of heroic action, sexuality, and myth; there's the rub. This concept of sleep as a vast, universal bank of story elements certainly appeals, suggesting that we've all been formed to inhabit a dream realm of symbolism and narrative as an essential feature of our humanity. After all, the Ancients thought dreams so important that they put a separate god in charge of them: Morpheus the dream-weaver, still recalled in words like 'morphine'. Sleep had its own deity, Hypnos (the Roman Somnus); they were brothers, but, like most siblings, kept their stuff separate.

On the other hand, we may sleep for more practical mental-hygienesque reasons. Remember Archimedes? King Hiero II of Syracuse suspected he was getting ripped off by the jeweler who made his golden crown, conjecturing that, in fact, silver was hidden within it. How, he asked Archimedes, could the 'gravity' of the metals be measured? Our scientist hero was at a loss, so — in time-honoured fashion — he 'slept on it'. Sure enough, some time later, while leaping friskily into his morning bath, he noticed how water was displaced onto the floor — and immediately perceived that a crown of pure gold would displace more water than one of mixed metals. "Eureka! (perfect tense of the Greek *heuriskein*, 'to find')!" he shouted, and ran out into the street starkers.

These days the term 'Eureka phenomenon' is used to describe the experience of unexpectedly finding — usually in the morning while shaving/putting on make-up/both — the answer to a long-vexing conundrum: in a flash of insight.

Such apprehensions are understood as coming, not out of the blue, but rather from the unconscious, which in sleep has had a chance to mull things over and work out a solution. When we're less alert, like after rising from sleep, we gain easier access to that less 'rational' part of the brain — and to its problem-solving capacity.

Whatever the theories, of mind or body, most folks believe that we simply *need* regular sustained sleep for the sake of sanity, that if we don't have 'down-time' from our cares and woes, we would go crazy. This sounds credible — after all, everyone feels better after a solid dose of zzzs, right?

Yet there are people who sleep very little, just an hour or two per night; and these individuals are not necessarily running mad in the streets. I even have a memory of reading of a few exceptional types who never sleep (or did I dream this?). Science would disagree, however, declaring such stories urban myths. According to the experts, only a few Africans, suffering from a rare and sinister gene disorder that stops the production of sleep hormones in middle age, truly *don't* sleep, and the condition apparently kills them.

But permanent alteration of sleep patterns does happen, albeit mysteriously: e.g., a person comes home one night from a party, can't get to sleep, then has insomnia evermore. Other times, such changes may come on after trauma, as in wars or accidents; a disruption occurs in the normal, quotidian habit. In such cases, regular sleep rhythms may return over time or not.

Either way, don't panic. Sleep is not necessarily the same as rest. You can relax your body by lying comfortably in bed (or somewhere else) for a time, without being actually asleep. You can even repose/recreate your mind, "knit up the unraveled sleeve of care," by resting with eyes closed, drifting into a meditative state or some other form of mind-quieting. You may also power nap, an activity



much in vogue in today's workplace. 'Sleeping on the job' used to be a big joke, Dagwood's dozy nemesis; now it's commended as a practice that results in sharper, more effective employees. And for some it does work. A friend of mine can close the office door, put her head down on the desk for five minutes, and really *sleep*, rising refreshed and ready to face the next crisis.

Nor should we forget that sleep is not omnipresent in nature. Creatures like sharks don't do it; there is even speculation that their sleeplessness may be connected to the curious fact that sharks are one of the few life-forms that does not get cancer. And even among slumberous beasts like us bipeds, the apparent need for sleep alters over time — as we boomers morphing into geezers are discovering.

There are, in fact, many advantages to the insomniac lifestyle. You can have two sets of friends, chipper action-packed day-people and cool, bohemian night owls, and hang with both.

As well, there's plenty of weird media on at night, psychic friends, phone-me folks, infomercials, odd little flicks on the arty channels: stuff the sleepy-bye folk *never* see. What else? Well, at 3 a.m. you can spend quality time with your cat, seeing him or her in true nocturnal mode (this can be scary, but really it's best to know who you're dealing with). And you can get some darn good work done, if, for instance, you're a researcher, writer, or instructor; night is when the world-wide-wait is at its shortest, the non-virtual realm quiet and interruption-free (unless Felix finds an exciting dust cuddle and needs to share).

More personally, though, there's something sensual and enveloping about the deep night. To the happy insomniac, night is welcoming — familiar territory. By now you know every square meter of your darkened abode, can walk it blind, don't need light to find your way. But should you *want* it, you know that there are lights everywhere, tiny, pretty ones, party red and green, starry white,

sunny gold — on computers, phones, clock faces, VCRs, appliances, power strips, smoke alarms — all atwinkle, creating a warm Xmas-like glimmer with associated festive feelings year round.

In the late night, *all* your senses are more balanced and acutely focused. It's bliss quiet, no phone ringing, no distracting traffic without. You can actually hear the sounds of silence, especially after a snowfall or the abrupt stop of a storm. Eating — a bowl of ice-cream, a leftover snack from the fridge with a glass of wine — is different, more complex and intensely satisfying. Everything feels good: from the fuzz of flannel on skin to the kinesthetic coziness of rooms that, in darkness, draw in on themselves to a more intimate configuration. A gentled warmth radiates from still-glowing embers in the hearth — and it's all just for you.

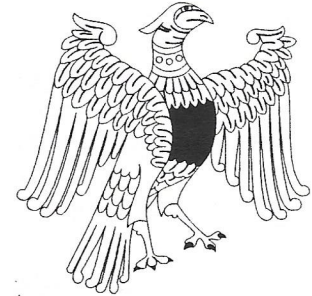
Maybe *that's* it, the unique privacy insomnia engenders that makes it so strangely appealing. There you are, alone but not really, solitary yet surrounded by the essentials of your life. Your beloved(s) sleep peacefully, securely, nearby, while all around the inanimate things, the machines of the house, buzz, hum, and whirl reassuringly out of sheer love, keeping you safe, warm, timed, monitored, in communication, etc. And you're content — to savour this special solitude, not switching on the TV, *not* toiling at a task, *not* doing. Just being. This is the secret pleasure to enjoy in the still of the night. For a while, all's right with you and the world; until, that is, it wakes up again.

A value-added bonus, for me at least, is that the latest sleep data out of UCSD suggests that one's memory is compromised by sleep deprivation; there are so many outrageous slings and arrows I need to forget...

Sounds great, doesn't it? Well, the good news is you can easily train yourself to insomnia, or rather

to cutting down on that wasteful sleep-time. Retire later, and try setting the alarm five minutes ahead every night, until you hit your optimum watch period. Sweet awakenings.

-Ryszard Dubanski



## NOTES & NOTICES

CIEA Participates in Launch of [www.6buckssucks.com](http://www.6buckssucks.com)

"Six bucks sucks!" If you want to tell the provincial government that you don't support the \$6 'first job' wage, a new coalition has made it easy for you. On November 9, CIEA President, Maureen Shaw, spoke at the launch of the BC Federation of Labour supported "6buckssucks" coalition. The coalition aims to repeal the recently announced \$6 'first job' wage.

Shaw noted that the decision to pay those with less than 500 hours of documented paid employment history, including young people and recent immigrants to Canada, discriminatory and unfair. "The cheaper wage is a subsidy to employers, forcing the most vulnerable workers to foot the bill for their job orientation and training. The 'first job' wage is just one more way to allow employers, who already have a very poor record of providing meaningful job training for employees, to shirk their responsibility," said Shaw.

"The lower wage also presumes that all people with less than 500 hours of documented, paid work history are inexperienced and worth less — regardless of their education or volunteer experience," said Shaw.



Also at the launch were Jim Sinclair, President of the BC Federation of Labour, Summer McFayden, BC Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students and David Chudnovsky, President of the BC Teachers' Federation.

The coalition website will allow concerned British Columbians to contact their MLA and record their experiences with the new wage program. The coalition will also conduct a petition drive in schools and post-secondary institutions throughout the province.

For more information go to their website or telephone Roseanne Moran, CIEA Communications Representative at 604- 873-8988.

## New Data Show Increasing Conflict Between Work and Rest of Life

Ottawa, October 23, 2001

Work/life conflict has increased markedly among Canadian workers over the past ten years. That conflict shows up as:

- increased workload and hours of work: the average employee surveyed spent 42 hours a week in paid employment in 1991, 45 hours in 2001
- more stress: high stress on the job is twice as prevalent today as ten years ago
- declining physical and mental health: more visits to the doctor, more cases of depression increased absenteeism: employees experiencing high work/life conflict have absenteeism rates three times those of employees with low work/life conflict
- lower job satisfaction: 62% were highly satisfied with their jobs in 1991, compared to only 45% in 2001

- lower commitment to employers: 66% highly committed to their organization in 1991, only 50% in 2001

These are findings of a new CPRN study by Linda Duxbury of Carleton University's School of Business and Chris Higgins of the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario. *Work-Life Balance in the New Millennium: Where Are We? Where Do We Need to Go?* is based on data from two major national surveys, one in 1990-92 and the other in 2000-01.

Health Canada funded both surveys and will publish full details of the most recent later this year. The study shows a growing proportion of the workforce is having difficulty balancing the competing roles of employee, parent, spouse and eldercare giver. Why should we care? "Our data demonstrate that the inability to balance work and family life is everyone's problem," says Duxbury. "It hurts the employer, the employee, the employee's colleagues, the employee's family and Canadian society as a whole."

Reduced productivity, absenteeism, turnover, lower commitment and lower morale all affect the employer's bottom line. As for the employee, work/life conflict can lead to marital strife, reduced family and life satisfaction and a host of physical and mental problems. The economic costs are significant. For example, the authors estimate absenteeism resulting from work/life conflict costs Canadian firms almost \$3 billion a year. Such conflict also results in extra visits to the doctor, adding \$425 million annually to the cost of health care, not to mention more hospital stays, more medical tests, more demands on other practitioners and more prescription drugs.

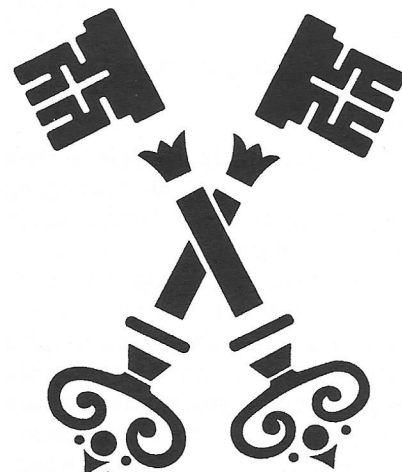
There are signs that demographic change, a more competitive labour market and the changing expectations of workers

themselves are motivating some employers to take work/life balance seriously. But not enough. "While the number of employers who talk about work/life balance has increased, concrete changes have been slow to materialize," says Duxbury. "And employers are the key to change."

The paper recommends that employers be more flexible on work hours and work location, increase employees' sense of control over their work, increase the number of supportive managers, and focus on creating more family-friendly work environments. Among their recommendations to government, the authors argue for legislation protecting an employee's right to refuse overtime, take time off in lieu of overtime pay and entitling employees to up to five days paid personal leave per year. They also suggest that the federal government become a model employer in this area, take the lead in establishing national childcare and eldercare programs in conjunction with the provinces, and strive to find ways to "make work pay."

To download a free copy of the report visit:

<http://lists.magma.ca:8080/T/A17.44.214.1.476>





## CIEA Talks to Provincial Education Committee

November 7, 2001

The BC Legislature's Select Standing Committee on Education has been holding consultations on the BC education system. On October 29, CIEA representatives made a presentation to the Committee in Victoria. CIEA encouraged the committee to recommend that government review the three-year education funding freeze and provide the necessary funding to meet new demand. We talked about the need for improved support for degree granting opportunities, research, trades training, Prior Learning Assessment and Adult Basic Education.

In addition to pointing out the importance of provincial post-secondary agencies, CIEA urged the committee to recommend a review of the BC post-secondary education system in order to clarify mandates and roles of institutions. CIEA's submission can be found at

<http://www.ciea.bc.ca/resources/educ-briefoct01.pdf>

The following week, CIEA participated in a presentation to the Education Committee as part of the Coalition for Public Education. A representative of the Canadian Federation of Students, presenting on behalf of the Coalition, identified the importance of the public education system in fostering core values of democracy, equality and diversity. The Coalition's written presentation can be found at

<http://www.ciea.bc.ca/resources/1101cfpe.pdf>

For more information, please contact Roseanne Moran at the CIEA office.

## Malaspina Memo About the Liberals and UCs

*(Ed. This is excerpted from an institution-wide Pres. message.)*

Good morning everyone. It has been a week since we experienced, however far away, the terrible events in the States. Like all of you, I managed to keep busy while at the same time think about what had happened and think about how our future would change.

It has also been a week since I met with our new Minister, Shirley Bond, and her Staff, to tell her, along with some of my UC fellow Presidents, about the University Colleges role in post secondary education and to talk about our particular challenges.

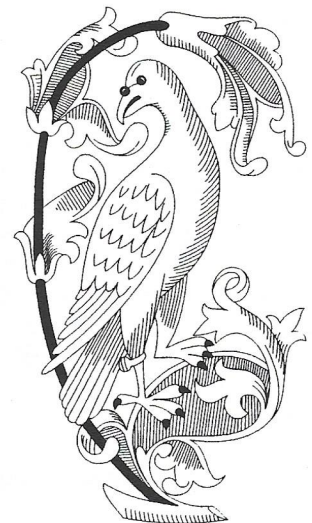
As I explained to Education Council yesterday, the Minister, after listening to the UC Presidents state our case, explained the following: first, she said that the Government likes the uniqueness and vision of the UCs and that the government, especially the Premier, values the contribution that our post secondary institutions make towards society; second, she would like to see less competitiveness among our institutions and more cooperation; third, she would like to help clarify the mandate of the UCs and in doing so would like to start a process, through dialogue, of examining the vision of the post secondary system; fourth, she would like the UCs to celebrate our successes and communicate them to our general public; fifth, she was very pleased to see that the UCs were taking the "Core Review" seriously and that we were going to put forward a joint paper to the address the government questions of review; sixth, she would like the UCs to examine better utilization of our physical plant and to look at year round usage of classrooms and other service areas; seventh; she wants to examine very carefully the whole issue of tuition fees and other fees to students and plans to do that through discussion with various student groups and others who are able to give input; eighth, she wants

to look at ways that the UCs and other post secondary institutions can help her Ministry and the Government examine major issues such as improving the economy, environmental challenges, specific projects such as oil and gas development, etc.

In other words, she sees great value in the expertise that our Faculty and Staff have to address many of the issues that all of us in B.C. will face in the near future.

In summary, it was a very positive meeting and a very open and honest exchange of viewpoints. She valued our approach and has now scheduled a half day meeting with the UC Presidents in mid October. I will keep you posted as to any new developments....

Regards, Rich  
President



## Sharp Minds Linked to a Positive Mind-set

August 13, 2001

By Anita Manning, *USA TODAY*

BALTIMORE — Sister Maura Eichner, 86, sits serenely in her sunny room with a brand-new Anne Tyler book in her lap. "Someone



told me it's her best one," she says, eagerness in her voice. "I'm a *passionate* reader."

Downstairs, Sister Genevieve Kunkel strides purposefully to the back of a chapel to deliver Communion wafers to nuns seated in wheelchairs. She's 90, but everything about her suggests a woman decades younger.

And about half a mile away, Sister Coralie Ullrich, 87, is busy at a computer, answering the phone and filing papers in the registrar's office at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, where she works every day. "I don't want to retire yet, until I have to," she says.

These women are part of an ongoing study of 678 Catholic nuns that is finding that old age "can be just as fulfilling a part of human development as adolescence," says epidemiologist David Snowdon, who began the Nun Study in 1986. "Aging itself is overrated."

Snowdon describes the study and its fascinating participants in a new book, *Aging With Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives* (Bantam, \$24.95). The work has yielded some startling, often encouraging discoveries, he says, not the least of which is that an educated mind, healthy habits and, maybe most important, a sense of joy in living can lead to a long, vibrant and productive life, and may even block the effects of Alzheimer's disease.

"Those who are hopeful, happy, optimistic in attitude live much longer," Snowdon says. "That happy state is probably also a healthy state."

The nuns involved in the study range in age from 75 to 106, and they are members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame congregation. Snowdon began his research as a pilot program at a Mankato, Minn., convent, then branched out to the order's six other U.S. provinces.

Villa Assumpta, here in Baltimore, is an assisted-living facility with two floors devoted to skilled nursing care

for those, like Sister Maura, who need it. She suffers from osteoporosis and uses a walker to get around. But her mind is as sharp as ever, and she stays in touch with the world by reading voraciously and writing to former students, to whom she taught writing and poetry for half a century. "I tell you, I've had a marvelous life," she says.

Of more than 100 sisters here, most of them former teachers, 32 are in the study. They are given a series of rigorous mental and physical tests each year and have granted scientists access to their personal and medical records, a treasure-trove of data that allows Snowdon and colleagues to look at factors in youth that might boost the odds for a long, vibrant old age. Because the sisters share similar lifestyles and can be followed for so many years, "it's as close as you can get to a laboratory-pure environment, a unique model of aging in a population," Snowdon says.

To help scientists gain insight into diseases of the brain, such as Alzheimer's, each of the women also has pledged to donate her brain for medical research after death. Since the study began, 335 brains have been donated. Of the first 241 examined, Snowdon writes, 118 patients had dementia. Of those, 43% had Alzheimer's disease, 34% had a mixture of Alzheimer's disease and stroke, and the rest had dementia from other causes.

The analysis of each brain is conducted by neurologist William Markesbery at the Sanders-Brown Center on Aging at the University of Kentucky Medical Center. He does not know at the time of the analysis whether, before her death, the sister had functioned well mentally or suffered from dementia.

Snowdon says they've found that the condition of the brain doesn't always predict mental function. He recalls a sister who "straightened me out about what's possible at extreme age. She was incredibly robust" and had no sign of dementia, but her

brain turned out to be full of the tangles of beta-amyloid protein that signal Alzheimer's disease.



Conversely, Snowdon and colleagues have found sisters who suffered severe dementia but had only slight evidence of brain damage. They have learned that cumulative damage from small strokes appears to trigger Alzheimer's in some patients. The finding is reason for hope, he says, because while "we don't yet know how to prevent the plaques and tangles of Alzheimer's disease, we do have effective strategies for reducing the risk of stroke."

Most encouraging of all is that Snowdon's team has found women who lived well into their 90s and beyond, who retained cognitive skills to the very end, and whose brains were absolutely healthy. By looking back at autobiographies written by the sisters before they took their vows, when most were in their early 20s, the researchers found that those who had a rich vocabulary and were able to express themselves eloquently early in life were most likely to continue through old age with their intelligence intact.

"You don't have to join a convent to learn from these sisters," Snowdon says. "People talk a lot about 'use it or lose it.' I think it's 'develop it and keep it.' You've got to develop your mind to its highest potential in young life, and as an adult you've got to keep that and train the mind to its highest function." His advice: "Buckle your



seat belt, watch your blood pressure, eat a prudent diet and be good at what humans are good at — language and social intercourse."

The nuns in the study aren't representative of American society. They're better educated — 85% had bachelor's degrees and 40% had master's degrees — and their overall health reflects a life without tobacco, alcohol or excesses of any kind. Snowden has found the nuns have a 25% lower risk of death in any given year after age 65 than the general population of women in the United States.

In terms of their education and lifelong careers, they share more with today's baby boomers than their own generational peers. Yet they don't seem to share the boomers' stress. "They're very mellow," Snowden says. He attributes that to a life of prayer and community. "I think it's part and parcel of how they deal with the stresses of day-to-day life. Part is that social support they have, and I think the spiritual part is the way they get through some of the ups and downs of life."

The sisters remain interested in each other and in life around them. "They're always looking forward," he says.

Snowdon is full of admiration for the sisters who place their trust in him and in the value of the research. "For all they knew, we were Dr. Frankensteins down here in Kentucky," he says. "They were very courageous to do it."

*(Ed. Here is The Nun Study Site.)*

[www.mc.uky.edu/nunnet/](http://www.mc.uky.edu/nunnet/)

## Language on the Job

*(Ed. According to my ever dubious net sources, these useful quotes are taken from actual federal employee performance evaluations.)*

1. "Since my last report, this employee has reached rock bottom and has started to dig."

2. "I would not allow this employee to breed."

3. "This employee is really not so much of a has-been, but more of a definite won't be."

4. "Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap."

5. "When she opens her mouth, it seems that it is only to change feet."

6. "He would be out of his depth in a parking lot puddle."

7. "This young lady has delusions of adequacy."

8. "He sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them."

9. "This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot."

10. "This employee should go far, and the sooner he starts, the better."

11. "Got a full 6-pack, but lacks the plastic thing to hold it all together."

12. "A gross ignoramus— 144 times worse than an ordinary ignoramus."

13. "He doesn't have ulcers, but he's a carrier."

14. "I would like to go hunting with him sometime."

15. "He's been working with glue too much."

16. "He would argue with a signpost."

17. "He brings a lot of joy whenever he leaves the room."

18. "When his IQ reaches 50, he should sell."

19. "If you see two people talking and one looks bored, he's the other one."

20. "A photographic memory but with the lens cover glued on."

21. "A prime candidate for natural de-selection."

22. "Donated his brain to science before he was done using it."

23. "Gates are down, the lights are flashing, but the train isn't coming."

24. "Has two brains: one is lost and the other is out looking for it."

25. "If he were any more stupid, he'd have to be watered twice a week."

26. "If you give him a penny for his thoughts, you'd get change."

27. "If you stand close enough to him, you can hear the ocean."

28. "It's hard to believe that he beat out 1,000,000 other sperm."

29. "One neuron short of a synapse."

30. "Some drink from the fountain of knowledge; he only gargled."

31. "Takes him 2 hours to watch 60 Minutes."

32. "The wheel is turning, but the hamster is dead."







# THE FSA ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER AND DANCE

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2001  
AT THE YARROW COMMUNITY HALL



HAPPY HOUR FROM 6:00 P.M.  
ROAST TURKEY AT 7:00 WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS  
CASH BAR & DANCING TO *SAVAGE WEST*  
( 'TIL THE FIDDLERS HAVE FLED...)



TICKETS \$22.50

(AVAILABLE TO NOVEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup> AT FACULTY RECEPTION)